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UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND  
Executive Board  
Special session

FOR ACTION

REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
ON THE INITIATIVE OF THE GOVERNMENTS OF  
CANADA, EGYPT, MALI, MEXICO, PAKISTAN AND SWEDEN  
TO CALL FOR A WORLD SUMMIT FOR CHILDREN

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Summary

This document reports the decision of the Heads of State of Egypt, Mali and Mexico and the Heads of Government of Canada, Pakistan and Sweden to call for a World Summit for Children in September 1990, and presents the Executive Director's views and recommendations to the Executive Board on this initiative.

In creating a potentially historic opportunity for the well-being of children, the Initiating Governments have requested the assistance of UNICEF in providing secretariat support for the preparation of the meeting of Heads of State or Government. They have also encouraged efforts by UNICEF and other institutions to stimulate the participation "of all sectors of society" in the process of preparing for the Summit and in considering possibilities for contributing to the improved survival, protection and development of children.

The present document presents the Statement of Agreement of the six Initiating Governments, reviews the origins of this initiative and the framework of the plan, transmits the request of the Initiators that UNICEF provide secretariat support for the preparation of the Summit and presents the Executive Director's views on the implications and opportunities for UNICEF.

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I. THE CALL FOR A WORLD SUMMIT FOR CHILDREN

A. Statement of Agreement by the six Initiating Governments

1. The following is the "Statement of Agreement on the World Summit for Children", as adopted by Personal Representatives of the Heads of State or Government of the six Initiating Governments at a meeting held in Geneva on 12-13 November 1989:

"Their Excellencies Prime Minister Mulroney of Canada, President Mubarak of Egypt, President Traore of Mali, President Salinas of Mexico, Prime Minister Bhutto of Pakistan and Prime Minister Carlsson of Sweden have agreed to call for a World Summit for Children, to be held at United Nations Headquarters in New York on Wednesday and Thursday, 26-27 September 1990, to enhance political commitment for the benefit of children, nationally and internationally.

"Personal Representatives of the six Initiating Heads of State or Government have consulted among themselves and with other Governments and with the secretariat of the United Nations Children's Fund. They concluded their exploratory discussions with a meeting in Geneva on 12-13 November 1989, which agreed to the following elements as the basis for a World Summit of Heads of State or Government on Children.

Purpose

"The purpose of the World Summit for Children is to bring attention and promote commitment, at the highest political level, to goals and strategies for ensuring the survival, protection and development of children, as key elements in the socio-economic development of all countries and human society. The meeting will also emphasize the particular impact on children of critical global problems. The aim is to stimulate new initiatives in all countries, and among the international community, to address those issues that most critically affect children for the decades ahead. The meeting will result in a Declaration of commitment to achieving these goals in the 1990s. The Initiators believe that the Summit also can accelerate ratification and implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

"Experience in recent years with the approaches known generally as the "child survival and development revolution" has demonstrated that dramatic progress can be achieved in reducing child deaths and improving child health and well-being. The necessary mobilization of multiple sectors of government and society to achieve this progress invariably requires the personal and active involvement of national leaders. It has also been demonstrated that this improvement in the survival of children through the involvement of parents contributes to a subsequent greater voluntary reduction in births.

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"The growing impact on children of several critical global problems - war and violence, poverty, debt, degradation of the environment, and drugs - must be a major concern of all political leaders. These issues present a challenge which demands concerted international action.

"The Initiators would view a new commitment by the world's leaders to protect the lives of children and to promote their well-being as a reaffirmation of the obligation under the Charter of the United Nations "to save succeeding generations". Making the survival, development and well-being of children a focus and a test of successful development efforts would affirm that the ultimate purpose of development is to enhance human capabilities and the human condition.

#### Date and venue

"The Summit is called for Wednesday afternoon and Thursday, 26-27 September 1990. The Initiators propose and request that the general debate of the forty-fifth session of the United Nations General Assembly be recessed during the proceedings of the World Summit for Children.

#### Invitations

"The Initiating Heads of State or Government, through their Permanent Representatives to the United Nations, request the Secretary-General of the United Nations to extend invitations in their behalf personally to all Heads of State or Government, with special encouragement to the Heads of State or Government of the Member States of the Executive Board of UNICEF. It is hoped that the invitations can be extended at the earliest possible date to allow all States to take full advantage of the available preparatory period.

#### Facilities and secretariat

"The Secretary-General is requested to make available for the Summit the facilities and services of the United Nations, and to provide a secretariat through the secretariat of UNICEF and the United Nations Department of Conference Services, under the responsibility of the Executive Director of UNICEF.

#### Planning Committee

"A Planning Committee for the World Summit for Children is constituted of Personal Representatives of the Initiating Heads of State or Government, as well as of such additional States as the Planning Committee, in consultation with the Secretary-General, may determine. The Personal Representatives of the Initiators shall facilitate the work of the Planning Committee.

Review by the Executive Board of UNICEF

"The principal policy recommendations regarding the agenda and proposed substantive product of the Summit will be shared with the Executive Board of UNICEF for review and comment.

Draft agenda

"The draft agenda for the Summit includes the following:

1. Opening of the Summit, election of two co-chairs, adoption of agenda.
2. Statement by the Secretary-General of the United Nations.
3. Address by the Executive Director of UNICEF.
4. General discussion of Objectives for the Survival, Protection and Development of Children in the 1990s.

[Several possible formats for the structure of the general discussion have been suggested, including: (a) five-minute plenary statements by each participating Head of State or Government, or by representative Heads of State or Government; (b) a free exchange of views on key issues, in either closed or public session; or (c) some combination of the above.]

5. Adoption and signing of a World Declaration for the Survival, Protection and Development of Children in the 1990s.
6. Conclusion of the Summit.

Participation of all sectors of society

"In the process of preparing for the Summit, all sectors of society are encouraged to consider their possibilities for contributing to the improved survival, protection and development of children. Important work in this field can be done by international organizations and institutions, non-governmental organizations, the media and professional associations, community organizations and public leaders, as well as authorities of government at various levels. The Initiators welcome efforts by UNICEF and other institutions to encourage this participation, and in various ways to seek to derive maximum benefit for children as a result of the call for the Summit.

Financial contributions towards the costs of the Summit

"All Governments and non-governmental organizations and institutions are encouraged to contribute to the financing of the Summit and related activities, according to their means. The early pledges by Canada (C\$250,000), Pakistan (US\$50,000) and Mali (US\$50,000), as well as pledges totalling US\$150,000 by NGOs, are noted with appreciation.

Budget and administration

"The Initiators request the Executive Director of UNICEF to propose a budget and plan of administration for the preparation and organization of the Summit. They request the earliest possible review of this budget by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, and its advice to guide the Planning Committee in the establishment of a budget. Voluntary contributions to this budget by all Member States and non-governmental sources are encouraged.

"The Initiators recognize that the Executive Board of UNICEF may also wish to authorize supplemental expenditures in support of activities related to the Summit, and to appeal for voluntary contributions to finance those activities.

"The Initiators further request the Executive Director of UNICEF to propose a work plan for the Planning Committee, particularly including identification of those issues which can be addressed by a working group in New York to be designated by the Planning Committee, and those issues which should be reserved for action by the formal Planning Committee."

B. Background

2. In the report on The State of the World's Children 1989, published in December 1988, UNICEF noted that:

"In the context of all other progress, there is therefore a special need to protect the mental and physical growth of all young children. The real possibility of largely achieving this great goal, over the next ten years, is a subject worthy of the notice of the political leaders of all nations. And there are now signs that high-level political attention is beginning to turn in this direction."

3. In reviewing the high-level attention that had been addressed to children by summit meetings in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the report suggested:

"The time may therefore be right to consider a meeting of heads of State - or perhaps a Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly such as was held to consider the crisis in Africa - in order to discuss and prepare for action on the great opportunities now available for protecting today's children - and tomorrow's world."

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4. The suggestion for a summit for children rapidly gained important political support, beginning with the Secretary-General of the United Nations. Many Heads of State or Government spoke in favour, as did other government officials, parliamentary associations and leading newspapers. Collective endorsements were first registered at the Paris Round-table on "Today's Children - Tomorrow's World" in March 1989, and then by the Heads of State or Government participating in the summit of 41 francophone countries in May, the summit of the Organization of African Unity in July, the summit of the Non-Aligned Movement in September and the summit of Commonwealth nations in October. A significant number of the members of the UNICEF Executive Board expressed encouragement during the course of debate at the April 1989 session.

5. By May, supporters of the proposal began to turn their attention from "whether" to "how". The Government of Sweden indicated its interest in exploring the possibility of a formal initiative in concert with other Governments. The Government of Canada, volunteering C\$250,000 <sup>1/</sup> towards the costs of a summit, pledged to "provide support and encouragement in all other ways in both the preparatory process and the Summit itself". Swedish authorities suggested that the Executive Director identify a small group of Heads of State or Government who had expressed particularly strong support for the idea of a summit and who might be prepared to take leadership roles. The Executive Director suggested President Mubarak of Egypt, President Traore of Mali and Prime Minister Bhutto of Pakistan, in addition to Prime Minister Carlsson of Sweden and Prime Minister Mulroney of Canada. He also suggested that President Salinas of Mexico be approached, given Mexico's chairmanship of the 1990 UNICEF Executive Board session.

6. Consultations among the six Governments, and with other Governments, began in earnest in June, with all six indicating a willingness to seriously explore the possibility of a collective initiative. The six Heads of State or Government each designated a Personal Representative to participate in discussions on their behalf, and bilateral consultations continued throughout the summer. At the suggestion of Egypt, a first informal gathering of the Personal Representatives was held in Belgrade at the time of the Non-Aligned Summit (early September), followed by the first formal meeting in New York on 1-3 October.

7. At their October meeting, the Personal Representatives drafted a series of proposals on the purposes and organizational framework for a possible summit for children. They returned the proposals to their capitals for review and continued bilateral consultations with other interested Governments. The Executive Director consulted with the Secretary-General and with the members of the Bureau of the Executive Board.

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<sup>1/</sup> Pledges to date are Canada (C\$250,000), Mali (\$50,000) and Pakistan (\$50,000). Contributions/pledges have been made by the National Committees for UNICEF of Italy (\$50,000), Japan (\$100,000) and the United States (\$100,000).



8. At their meeting in Geneva on 12-13 November, the Personal Representatives reported the approvals of their Governments to proceed collectively to call a World Summit for Children, largely in accordance with the October proposals. The "Statement of Agreement on The World Summit for Children", detailing the purpose, plan for organization and preparation and requests for United Nations assistance, was approved.

9. At that meeting, the Initiating Governments agreed to establish a Planning Committee to guide preparations for the Summit. The Committee currently consists of personal representatives of the six Initiating Heads of State or Government and it is intended to invite other Heads of State of Government to designate personal representatives for this Committee.

10. One of the tasks of the Committee will be to draft a "World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children in the 1990s". It is anticipated that the declaration will be the official communiqué of the Summit which the Initiators will invite the Executive Board to review and comment on at its April 1990 session.

C. Requests by the Initiators for United Nations and UNICEF assistance

11. As stated in their Agreement, the Initiators request the assistance of the United Nations and UNICEF in facilitating arrangements for the Summit. They have requested: (a) that the Secretary-General of the United Nations issue invitations on their behalf and that the Summit be accommodated at United Nations Headquarters in New York; and (b) that UNICEF provide secretariat support for the preparation of the Summit.

12. Those requests were presented on 28 November 1989 to the Secretary General, who welcomed the Initiator's resolve to associate the United Nations with their initiative. The question of UNICEF providing secretariat support for the Summit, as well as undertaking related programme activities, is the subject of the present special session of the Executive Board.

13. The Initiators encourage Governments and non-governmental organizations and institutions to contribute to the financing of the Summit and related activities.

II. Views and recommendations of the Executive Director

A. Opportunities for UNICEF programme acceleration

14. The Executive Director notes that a common characteristic to the real "success stories" of significantly accelerated programmes for the survival, protection and development of children during the 1980s has been the personal engagement and sustained involvement of national leadership. Experience has also shown that little accelerated progress is achieved if the national leadership is neither engaged nor motivated to ensure sustained attention to child health and development activities.

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15. The idea of a Summit for Children was thus conceived as a means to accord the needs and interests of children a stronger and higher place on national political agendas. The Summit also offers an occasion for national leaders to consider appropriate strategies for ensuring that the needs and interests of children are always considered alongside other national policies that may affect those needs. As described in the UNICEF paper "Why a World Summit for Children?":

"It is not so much the business to be transacted by the leaders of the world sitting at one table to discuss the needs and opportunities for children that will make the difference in deaths averted and lives built, but the very fact that the leaders are doing so. Their attention to the agenda for children - to the largest generation ever to live on the earth - would give new credence and immediacy to that agenda, providing the foundation for establishing goals for public policy in all areas impinging upon child survival, child health, child learning, and contemporary threats to the erosion of childhood. By identifying with the cause of children and family life, national leaders will establish a new priority to be attached to children in national policy and launch an unprecedented mobilization globally and within each country, galvanizing the collective strength of government and public institutions, of media and business, of professional associations and voluntary movements, of religion and moral leadership.

"The momentum for such a mobilization can only come by capturing the attention and the serious engagement of the world's political leaders and the political forces which surround them."

16. The Executive Director believes that, as UNICEF constantly searches for opportunities that can be maximized for the benefit of children, a World Summit for Children will be an unprecedented opportunity to capture world attention. It is a leverage for stimulating leaders to focus attention on the factors affecting the survival, development and protection of children and it is a powerful medium for obtaining renewed commitment to sustained programmes for children. UNICEF and other advocates and activists for children stand to gain by promoting the Summit's historic importance and in assisting Governments and other partners to use the Summit as a lever to accelerate, increase and strengthen programme delivery.

17. The Initiating Governments confirm their encouragement that all sectors of society consider their possibilities for contributing to the improved survival, protection and development of children as part of the preparatory process for the Summit. The Initiators welcome efforts by UNICEF and other institutions to encourage this participation and, in various ways, to seek to derive maximum benefit for children as a result of the call for the Summit.

18. The challenge in the nine months leading to the Summit is to make use of the opportunity offered by this historic meeting to organize activities and informational programmes to revitalize the co-operation with many traditional partners and to reach out to additional constituencies, and to enlist stronger and more sustained involvement in the development of policies and the implementation of programmes for the well-being of children. The year of the World Summit for Children, like the International Year of the Child, can be a stimulus for spontaneous activities for children and the launching of a decade of enhanced and accelerated action for children in all societies.

19. The preparatory period preceding the Summit provides UNICEF country offices with valuable opportunities for strengthening their co-operation with Governments and for forming new alliances in the non-governmental sector. The heightened awareness that will result from preparation for the Summit at national level provides opportunities for undertaking activities that will be of lasting benefit to children. For example, it will be possible to initiate the preparation of national action plans for the 1990s and to close the gaps between the present situation of children and the goals established in the "Strategies for children in the 1990s".

20. Although progress has been made in increasing immunization levels world-wide by 60 per cent since 1980, thereby saving the lives of some 6,000 children daily, approximately 7,000 children still die every day because of vaccine-preventable diseases. A Summit can serve as a compelling impetus for countries with lagging immunization programmes and weak infrastructures to strengthen and accelerate their efforts to achieve universal child immunization by the end of 1990.

21. Along those same lines, it might also be possible to achieve a breakthrough in the promotion of the knowledge and use of oral rehydration therapy (ORT) in the treatment of dehydration caused by diarrhoeal diseases. Although diarrhoeal dehydration remains the single biggest killer of children, less than 20 per cent of doctors and 10 per cent of health workers have been trained in the use of ORT despite unanimous expert acknowledge that it is potentially the most important medical breakthrough this century. Moreover, less than 30 per cent of the developing world's families are attempting to put it into practice.

22. With regard to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, a Summit will place the Convention in a central global role, thereby helping to establish it as the accepted standard for all nations. A goal of certifying the Convention's entry-into-force at the time of the Summit can serve as a powerful boost for its early consideration, propelling it to implementation much faster than could otherwise be expected.

23. In the follow-up to the March 1990 World Conference on Education for All, the Summit can focus on particular plans of action emanating from the conference that require support and commitment at the highest levels in order to ensure their implementation.

24. The Summit can be the stimulus for a vast array of consciousness-raising and commitment-motivating activities related to children, and many allies are already developing plans to respond to this opportunity:

(a) The Government of Mali is considering district-level symposia leading to a national strategy conference to be convened by the President. The national conference would assist the President in preparing Mali's input to the World Summit, and President Traore plans to encourage similar activities in other African countries;

(b) Several National Committees for UNICEF are exploring possibilities in public education, political advocacy and fund-raising;

(c) The Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Committee on UNICEF anticipates a special NGO forum or leadership conference to communicate NGO views to the Summit and to mobilize non-governmental action globally, as well as at the national level;

(d) The World Council of Churches and the World Conference on Religion and Peace are discussing the possibility of a global religious observance and mobilization including a World Religious Leaders Summit to appeal for greater involvement of religious institutions in all parts of the world in programmes for children and to address a moral appeal to the world's political leaders and world-wide religious observances preceding the Summit, including an interfaith service in New York, to which the Heads of State or Government will be invited;

(e) The League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies is considering how it might use the Summit to revitalize and extend its "Child Alive" programme;

(f) The United States National Commission on Infant Mortality is planning a multinational conference of health and social welfare ministries to exchange experiences that could be applied in reducing infant morbidity and mortality.

#### B. Recommendations

25. The Executive Director recommends that UNICEF accept the request of the Initiators of the World Summit for Children that UNICEF provide secretariat support for the preparation of the Summit meeting.

26. The Executive Director further recommends that UNICEF take advantage of the opportunity presented by the World Summit for Children to promote public awareness and stimulate programme mobilization among Governments, NGOs and institutions, the media and professional associations, community organizations and public leaders, as encouraged by the Initiating Governments.

27. The Executive Director's proposals with regard to providing secretariat support for the Summit meeting and undertaking Summit-related mobilization activities, as well as financial arrangements in support of those actions, are contained in E/ICEF/1989/AB/L.15.

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